

Message Text

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11

ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY LIMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 246

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PE

SUBJECT: RETURN OF THE EXILED

REF: LIMA 4385

1. FOLLOWING THE LONG-AWAITED ANNESTY WHICH WAS DECREED ON MAY 11, INFLUENTIAL JOURNALISTS ENRIQUE ZILERI, FRANCISCO IGARTUA AND MANUEL D'ORNELLAS HAVE RETURNED TO LIMA. FORMER PRESIDENT BELAUNDE, WHO HAD BEEN UNABLE TO RETURN DURING THE VELASCO YEARS BUT WHO WAS ACCLAIMED BY ENTHUSIASTIC FOLLOWERS DURING A SEVERAL WEEK VISIT TO LIMA IN JANUARY, ALSO RETURNED TO PERU MAY 15.

2. FORMER PRESIDENT BELAUNDE EXPECTS TO REMAIN IN PERU FOR SEVERAL MONTHS. HE HAS REFRAINED FROM POLITICAL COMMENTARY UP TO NOW BUT IS SON EXPECTED TO ENGAGE IN THE PUBLIC DEBATE. BELAUNDE WILL BE A MOVING FORCE AT THE END OF MAY ACCION POPULAR CONGRESS AND HAS ASKED FOR TELEVISION TIME (WE DOUBT THAT IT WILL BE APPROVED) FOR AN ADDRESS TO THE NATION. BELAUNDE ALSO PLANS TO TRAVEL ABOUT THE COUNTRY OVER THE NEXT FEW MONTHS, PRESUMABLY TO CHECK THE POLITICAL PULSE IN THE PROVINCES AND DETERMINE IF HE AND ACCION POPULAR RETAIN SIGNIFICANT FOLLOWING.

3. RETURNING JOURNALISTS HAVE SPOKEN OUT ON THE REVOLUTIONARY PROCESS. ENRIQUE ZILERI, WHO PLANS TO REOPEN THE CRITICALLY

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INDEPENDENT AND INFLUENTIAL PERIODICAL CARETAS, SURPRISED SOME

POLITICAL OBSERVERS WITH A COMMENT TO THE PRESS THAT EARLY ELECTIONS WOULD NOT SERVE THE NATIONAL INTEREST. ZILERI ALSO ASSERTED THAT POLITICAL AGREEMENTS BETWEEN PARTIES (AND PRESUMABLY BETWEEN THE GOP AND A POLITICAL PARTY) WOULD NOT BE "USEFUL". ALTHOUGH HE OPINED THAT THE GOP SHOULD SET A POLITICAL TIMETABLE, ZILERI STATED THAT HE HAD DOUBTS ABOUT THE WISDOM OF CALLING A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY IN THE NEAR FUTURE. ELSEWHERE IN HIS PRESS INTERVIEW, ZILERI PRAISED MORALES BERMUDEZ FOR HIS TOLERANCE AND BLASTED EX-PRESIDENT VELASCO AS A "REACTIONARY, IRRITABLE GENERAL WHO TOOK A CORRESPONDENCE COURSE IN POPULISM. HIS SOCIAL RESENTMENT POISONED HIM AND POISONED THE COUNTRY." VELASCO WAS SURROUNDED, AND ZILERI, WITH A CORRUPT OLIGARCHIC GROUP AND A LEFTIST ELEMENT WHICH HE NEVER COMPREHENDED.

4. FRANCISCO IGARTUA, DIRECTOR OF THE WEEKLY OIGA WHO HAD BEEN DEPORTED BY VELASCO FOR WRITING ABOUT PERU'S ECONOMIC CRISIS, ALSO PRAISED MORALES BERMUDEZ AND COMMENTED FAVORABLY ON RECENT PRESIDENTIAL SPEECHES. IGARTUA TOOK EXCEPTION, HOWEVER, TO MORALES BERMUDEZ' CLAIM THAT ONLY THE ARMED FORCES COULD CARRY OUT THE REVOLUTION AND TERMED THAT CLAIM AN EXPRESSION OF "TOTALITARIANISM". LIKE ZILERI, IGARTUA STATED THAT IT WAS PREMATURE TO DISCUSS ELECTIONS DURING A TIME OF GRAVE ECONOMIC CRISIS.

5. COMMENT: REPATRIATED DEPORTEES PRAISED MORALES BERMUDEZ, AS MIGHT BE EXPECTED. THEIR DOUBTS ABOUT THE ELECTORAL PROCESS WERE MORE SURPRISING. IF ZILERI AND IGARTUA REMAIN INTELLECTUALLY CONVINCED THAT ELECTIONEERING IS COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE, THEY MAY HELP TO DIRECT CIVILIAN POLITICAL DEBATE AWAY FROM DISCUSSIONS OF ELECTIONS IN THE NEAR FUTURE (WHICH THE MILITARY CONSIDERS THREATENING) TOWARD A MORE DELIBERATE SEARCH FOR THE MODALITIES OF CONSTRUCTING A CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK BASED ON NEW PERUVIAN REALITIES.

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